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ABSTRACT

This paper critically examines the concepts of professions and professionalization that prevail in the early childhood literature and offers alternative conceptualizations from the sociology of professions. After delineating traditional concepts of professions, Wilensky's (1964) popular definition of a profession is adopted for this examination. According to Wilensky, any occupation wishing to exercise professional authority must find a technical basis for it, assert an exclusive jurisdiction, link both skill and jurisdiction to standards of training, and convince the public that its services are uniquely trustworthy. The four conditions of this definition are discussed in relation to day care. Subsequent discussion points out that the advocates of professionalization in day care may not be representative of the occupational group as a whole, and that professionalization, although widely accepted in the early childhood literature, may have a number of unintended consequences. In the concluding discussion, the application of traditional models of professionalization to the early childhood field is criticized because it ignores the issue of gender. Ideas are offered on how to integrate an appropriate professional model for day care workers within an ecological approach. (RH)

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DAY CARE AND THE QUEST FOR PROFESSIONALISM:

ISSUES AND DILEMMAS IN TRADITIONAL WOMEN'S WORK

by

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ABSTRACT

The crisis in North American child care has been repeatedly addressed in both popular and professional literatures. Increasing the professional status of the day care worker is seen by early childhood education leaders as a means to increasing salaries and morale while decreasing the disproportionately large turnover rates. Such changes are seen as essential to improving the quality of child day care.

The application of traditional models of professionalization to the early childhood field are criticized because they ignore the issue of gender. Ideas on how to integrate an appropriate professional model for day care workers within an ecological approach are suggested.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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INTRODUCTION

The crises in North American child care has been addressed repeatedly in both popular and professional literature in North America (Meredith, 1986). Of primary concern is the quality of care provided in day care centers, and the impact of poor quality care on the development of children. (Phillips, 1987; Whitebook et.al., 1989). Day care staff are known to be extremely low paid and undervalued (Hostetler, 1984; Morin, 1989; Status of Women 1986). Not surprisingly, staff "burnout" and high rates of staff turnover (estimated at approximately 40% annually) characterize child care workers (Maslach & Pines, 1977; Daniel, 1990). Staff turnover has recently been isolated as a key factor contributing to low quality care (Whitebook et.al., 1989).

Much of the response to this crisis from leaders in the field of early childhood education focuses on the need for increasing the professional status of day care personnel. Authors have emphasized the need for professionalization (VanderVen, 1988), have affirmed the progress made towards professionalization (Griffin, 1989; Radomski, 1986), and have stressed the importance of advocacy geared to enlightening the general public about the importance of professionalizing the early childhood field (Hostetler, 1981; Zinsser, 1990). The appropriateness of traditional conceptions of professions for early childhood education and day care has recently been questioned in the early childhood literature (Spodek et.al., 1988).

This paper will critically examine the concepts of professions and professionalization that prevail in the early childhood literature, and offer alternative conceptualizations from the sociology of professions that may provide additional insight to the present problem. It will be argued that while the use of traditional concepts of professions as a conceptual framework may have been useful in providing direction, it would be timely to re-examine the needs of the day care field in light of more recent sociological thought on professions and professionalization.

TRADITIONAL CONCEPTS OF PROFESSIONS

Much of the early childhood literature borrows from sociological studies for a conceptual framework within which to place their discussions of professionalization in the early childhood field (Katz, 1988; Griffin, 1989; Spodek et.al., 1988). However, the references relate by and

large to earlier sociological writings, which are predominantly either descriptive or definitive in nature (e.g. Cogan, 1955; Becker, 1962; Greenwood, 1966). Early childhood writers have used this literature as a yardstick to measure how far the field has come on the journey to professionalism, and to assess what directions workers should take in order to increase the professional status of the field.

A recent example of the way in which early childhood education writers use sociological definitions of a profession as a yardstick found is in Katz (1988). Katz claims that most scholars of the subject of professions seem to agree that eight criteria must be met before an occupation may be classified as a profession (p. 75) social necessity; altruism; autonomy; a code of ethics; distance from the client; standards of practice; prolonged training; and specialized knowledge.

Greenwood (1966) conceptualizes the phenomenon of professionalism as a continuum where the prestigious professions are bunched at the right end of the pole, the less developed professions (such as social work) placed somewhere in the middle, and the less skilled occupations at the opposite pole. Presumably, day care personnel would presently be placed to the left of social workers.

It must be borne in mind, however, that day care workers are not a homogeneous occupational group. Training, certification and licensing requirements vary from state to state and from province to province. Use of the professional yardstick approach therefore begs the question "Who is being measured?" Indeed, Jorde-Bloom (1989) has noted the diversity of caregivers own perceptions of their work. At the same time, this diversity in no way excludes day care workers from the possibility of being professionals. Bucher and Strauss (1961) conceived professions to be loose amalgamations of segments pursuing different objectives in different manners, often delicately held together. This was found to be typical of both well-established and newly-establishing professions.

There is considerable disagreement and confusion surrounding the attributes of a profession. Indeed, other early childhood authors analyzing the level of professionalism of the field have cited different criteria (Griffin, 1989; Spodek et.al., 1988) than those cited by Katz in

1988. Johnson (1972) reviewed the professional literature and found a total of twenty-three different characteristics which differentiated professions from occupations. No single characteristic was consistently found in each study; nor could two studies agree on the same combination of attributes (Office des professions du Quebec, 1976). Moreover, it is argued that some of the characteristics cited relate to an idealized or outdated view of the professions. For example, lawyers and doctors now rarely work for free (altruism) (Lally and Barber, 1974). Similarly, as professional activity has moved from client-professional dyads into corporations and agencies, the individual autonomy of professionals has declined.

Sociologists are moving beyond delineating the characteristics of professions; questioning the usefulness of this approach (see, for example, Eliot Friedson, 1983). At the same time, Cogan (1955) has argued that these definitions continue to be important, since they can be used in either a persuasive or operational manner. Persuasive definitions are used to persuade individuals both inside and outside of the occupational group that a person or group of people are indeed professionals. Operational definitions are used as directives or guidelines for an occupational group aspiring to become more professional.

Early childhood advocates seem to use the sociological definitions of professions for both purposes. It is therefore important to first review the application of traditional sociological concepts of the professions in the early childhood literature. By doing so, current persuasive and operational definitions will become more readily apparent. Secondly, it will be argued that, if day care workers are to increase their professional status, a fundamental change in the definition of a "professional" will need to take place.

While any one of several definitions of a "profession" could be used in this analysis, the following definition by Wilensky (1964) will be applied, because of its popularity in the sociology of professions literature:

> Any occupation wishing to exercise professional authority must find a technical basis for it, assert an exclusive jurisdiction, link both skill and jurisdiction to standards of training, and convince the public that its services are uniquely trustworthy (p. 138).

The Technical Basis for Day Care Practice

According to Wilensky (1964), the term "technical basis" refers to systematic knowledge or doctrine acquired through long and prescribed training. The success of the claim is greatest where society evidences widespread consensus regarding the knowledge base. While this knowledge base need not be exclusively scientific, professions which can "shine in scientific light" are more likely to achieve professional authority.

Although it is widely argued within the early childhood literature that staff in early childhood programs should acquire basic early childhood knowledge, information and theories (Katz, 1984; Ade, 1982; Bergen, 1989; Radomski, 1986) there are many unanswered questions regarding which theories, which skills, and the nature of the relationship between knowledge and skills for practitioners. At the same time, there does not appear to be widespread belief in our society that any knowledge base is required for day care practitioners.

Much of the ambivalence towards the question of knowledge stems from the difficulty of perceiving group child care as being essentially different than familial care (Blum, 1983). Several attempts have been made to delineate the differences between mothering and teaching young children (Katz, 1970; 1980), but there is little empirical evidence to support this differentiation. While Hess et. al. (1981) did find some differences in interactional styles between mothers and teachers of preschool children, their study did not include an evaluative component which could lead to a judgement of preferability.

There are numerous studies which have linked training to higher quality care, (Ruopp et.al., 1979; Clarke-Stewart, 1988; Whitebook et. al., 1990). These are often used to support the claim that caregivers require a knowledge base. However, most studies do not differentiate between type, quality, content and length of training. There is some evidence (Seedfeldt, 1979; Berk, 1985) that increased formal education of caregivers is related to more favorable developmental outcomes in children, or to behavior that is likely to result in more favorable outcomes, but again, there is no evidence that explicates precisely what the content i.e. the knowledge base should be. The most recent study (Whitebook et. al., 1990) found that years of

formal education was a better predictor of quality interactions than specific early childhood training.

Silin (1988) claims that theories of child development have been viewed as the required core of knowledge. This is perhaps partially due to the fact that psychology is more prestigious than other fields that are just as important to the care and education of young children. However, developmental theory does not translate easily into practice, nor does it answer the question of which theories should be applied, when, and how this should be done. Other disciplines, such as sociology and history, are viewed by some as being equally relevant and important as developmental theory (Silin, 1988).

It is claimed that the knowledge base of day care practitioners is yet to be identified (Katz, 1988). Part of the confusion certainly stems from the fragmented historical development of early childhood education in general, and day care in particular (Grubb, 1989; Caldwell, 1990). Clarke-Stewart (1988) and Caldwell (1988) further point out that one of the most important aspects of the knowledge base of day care professionals - knowledge relating to group care of infants and toddlers - is yet to be developed. Thus, while further research might assist in identifying, defining, and furthering the knowledge base, (Powell, 1982; Silin, 1988) much ambiguity exists regarding whether any specific knowledge base is really required for day care practitioners to act competently.

Jurisdiction

The second component of Wilensky's (1964) definition refers to jurisdiction. The concept of jurisdiction has recently emerged as a key to understanding the professions. Jurisdiction can be seen as society's sanctioning of an occupations' claim to exercise legitimate control over a certain type of work. This control usually involves the defining of a problem, reasoning about it, and taking appropriate action. Jurisdiction is not a static phenomenon. Different occupational groups vie for control over certain fields; and one group's control is often preempted by another's (Goode, 1960). Jurisdiction is created by both objective need and the subjective definition of need (often created by the occupational group that gains power).

While the need for care for the children of working parents has been established (Status of Women, 1986) the professional group endowed with jurisdictional control over child day care has not. The history of day care (Lazerson, 1972; O'Brien Steinfels, 1973; Greenblatt, 1977) reveals that it has, at various times, come under the influence of a variety professional and non-professional groups. The first day care centers were controlled by wealthy philanthropic women. In the early 1900's, when day care was considered a last resort for children of dysfunctional families, day care centers were controlled by social workers (O'Brien Steinfels, 1973). During the depression and World War II, teachers were involved in day care, but their involvement diminished when special government funding provided during those times was withdrawn (Dratch, 1974). Psychologists entered the day care arena with a flourish of compensatory programs in the 1960's and 1970's. Psychologists were usually most interested in developmental or curriculum model development. Throughout all these periods, however, the majority of day care centers in the United States were run by private owners with no professional qualifications. It is also important to note that while the aforementioned groups controlled or influenced day care, the actual work of child care was carried out mostly by untrained female workers.

Today, uncertainty remains concerning what occupational group (if any) should have jurisdiction over day care. There is a growing trend to place day care in the school system, bringing it under the jurisdiction of teachers and school administrators. There is considerable debate in the literature concerning the desirability of this trend (Zigler, 1987; Shanker, 1987; Morgan, 1989; Mitchell and Modigliani, 1989), although little empirical evidence exists to support or deny it. Processes inherent in schooling (like standardization, formalization and an emphasis on academic progress) can at times work against optimum early childhood environments, which emphasize free play, individualization, and autonomy. Jurisdiction remains a central issue in the professionalization of day care workers.

Linking Skill and Jurisdiction with Training

The third aspect of Wilensky's (1964) definition entails the linking of an identified knowledge and skill base to jurisdiction over training. Day care personnel today can be prepared

by competency-based in-service training (Kurtz, 1975) offered in community college-based early childhood education programs. While some of these programs are competency based, others combine theoretical content with supervised practicums (Lero & Kyle, 1985). Baccalaureate training programs for day care personnel include: Child care faculties which focus primarily on children in residential settings (VanderVen, 1988), early childhood education faculties; few of which primarily focus on children under the age of four (Peters & Kostelnick, 1981), and Departments of Home Economics. Although leaders in the field of early childhood education claim the training of day care personnel as their jurisdiction (Caldwell, 1988; Bowman, 1986) they have not been "given" any official mandate to do so (Joffe, 1977).

The competency field-based training and community college certificate and diploma courses have been hailed as more appropriate training mechanisms for day care personnel both in terms of their accessibility and content. This is due to the "educational needs, learning history and life style of child care personnel" which differ substantially from those of the traditional population served by universities and colleges (Kurtz, 1975). However, the minimal theoretical content is thought to leave the trainees unprepared for decision-making and control (i.e. jurisdiction) in the field (Seaver and Cartwright, 1977) or as to ensure quality programs for young children (Bowman, 1986). On the other hand, the baccalaureate training programs' lack of focus on day care and/or children under the age of four also makes their appropriateness questionable.

Almy (1975; 1988) has proposed an interdisciplinary model of post graduate education that would prepare leaders in the field who would disseminate the research findings, supervise and train staff, develop programs and work with parents. While this model has reportedly been successful outside of North America (Rosenthal and Shimoni, 1988), its application here has not been extensive.

In summary, both the historical development of day care services and the present day ambiguities concerning appropriate training for day care personnel lead to the conclusion that no single occupational group as yet has sole jurisdiction over child care. While early childhood

educators seem to be the most likely group at present, their jurisdiction has not been sanctioned by society, nor by policies that concern the licensing and funding of day care centers (Griffin, 1989).

The Public Image of Day Care

The last aspect of Wilensky's (1964) definition of a profession relates to the general public's acceptance of the occupation; that its services are uniquely trustworthy. It is difficult to assess the public image of day care. One study, reviewing articles in popular magazines, concluded that day care is generally portrayed in a positive light as a necessary service for children and families (Perry-Sheldon and Fairchild, 1983). However, such articles seldom explain to parents the differences between various services (for example, nursery schools and day care centers) (Kahn and Kamerman, 1987). It is equally difficult to assess parents' view of day care by the choices they make in the care of their children. Child care options are often selected based on cost or convenience rather than preferred service.

Many widely read "experts" on young children are outspoken critics of day care (Pringle, 1975; Fraiberg, 1977, Leach, 1979). Others realize that day care is a necessity, but recommend that it should be avoided or a child's' entry into day care be delayed if possible (Brazelton, 1986). Much of the opposition of day care is based on clinical experience with children, and most of the concern is focused on very young children.. While some research findings (Belsky and Rovine, 1988; Belsky, 1989) support these concerns, there is considerable ongoing debate (Scarr, 1984).

Innes and Innes, (1984) found that many day care center staff felt that parents who place their child in day care are negligent. This suggests that many caregivers themselves do not see day care as a wholly desirable service. Finally, there is growing documentation that kindergarten and primary teachers find day care graduates more aggressive and "difficult" than children who have not been in day care (Katz, 1988; Betsalel-Presser, 1989).

The desirability of day care centers has been questioned by authors such as Blum (1983), Berger (1979), Bane et.al. (1979), and Suransky (1982). Their concern is that day care can potentially undermine the responsibility of the family, exert social control and impose middle class culture on children from diverse backgrounds.

There is also an abundance of professional and lay literature that portrays day care as a potentially desirable service to families and to children (Hymes and Roby, 1974; Scarr 1984; Zigler and Ennis, 1989). Even so, day care is not universally accepted in our society. The reasons for this are complex, and include the historical association of day care as welfare for the underprivileged, and the public perception that day care runs counter to the "mothercare ethic" (Pence, 1986). There is likely a vicious circle in effect here as well. Underfunding of day care centres, poor licensing and regulatory systems, and the low status of day care workers have likely contributed to an abundance of poor day care centers. Much of the public image of day care might be based on what is, and not on what could be.

WHO WANTS PROFESSIONALIZATION OF DAY DAY?

This brief overview of day care in the context of Wilensky's (1964) criteria for professionalization creates an image of an occupational group struggling to climb on to even the lowest position of Greenwood's (1966) continuum. The lack of consensus regarding the knowledge base required; the lack of clarity regarding the control, training and licensing of day care personnel; and the ambivalence of our society towards the necessity or desirability of day care centers seem incongruent with the traditional image of a profession.

While questions regarding the feasibility or desirability of professionalization are beginning to emerge in the early childhood literature (Silin, 1988; Spodek et.al. 1988) it is more often considered as a given that professionalization is the answer to the problems of early childhood education and day care. This gap between the present condition in day care and the ambition expressed in the early childhood literature may be explained partially by Bucher and Stelling's (1961) description of the role of associations in the professionalizing process of occupations. They stress that the activity of the associations such as the preparation of a code of ethics, development of a set of standards, and the advocacy for public recognition, present a deceptive picture of consensus within the occupational group. The National Association for the Education of Young Children has, in the past decade, been involved in all the above mentioned activities

(Feeney and Kipnis, 1989; Radomsky, 1986; Bredekamp, 1986). However, only approximately ten percent of employees in early childhood services belong to that association (Hostetler, 1984).

It is apparent that academicians, researchers and administrators do not accurately represent the views of the occupational group as a whole. Much more needs to be known about who the child care workers are before the question of their views on professionalization can be addressed. The licensing regulations in many states or provinces do not reflect a concern for professionalization; nor are there reports of parental support on this issue. Presently, the single voice advocating for increased professionalization of day care workers are the professional associations linked to early childhood education.

THE DESIRABILITY OF PROFESSIONALIZATION

The professionalization of day care personnel is desirable for a number of reasons and, as mentioned previously, has gained wide acceptance in the early childhood literature. At the same time, a number of unintended consequences can follow the process of professionalization. These consequences have become more apparent as the conflict perspective has increased in popularity since the early 1970's. Conflict theorists point out the acute power advantages that professionals hold over the general populace. Becker (1962) defines a profession as any occupational group that has power and prestige. The political effects of this ability to wield this power has been the focus of numerous sociological authors (Illich, 1977; Zola, 1977; McKnight, 1977; Caplan, 1979; McKinlay, 1973)..

Bledstein (1976) claims that "the culture of professionalism in America has been enormously satisfying to the human ego, while it has taken an inestimable toll on the integrity of individuals" (p.xi). The blind faith that citizens have in professionals is claimed to undermine the democratic process. Citizens' opinions are outweighed by those of professionals. The powerful professions (to which all marginal occupations aspire) are accused of creating the necessity of their service; of "taking over" natural processes such as aging and pregnancy, and creating unnecessary dependencies. Zola (1977) thus refers to the health professions as "disabling professions".

In early childhood, the professionalization of caregivers has the unintended effect of increasing the expectations of parents caring for children at home while stripping them of their own authority base to "know" what is best for their own child. Further, professionalizing caregivers devalues both motherhood and fatherhood, as training and education come to be thought of as necessary conditions for high quality care (Strong-Boag, 1982; Batinder, 1981).

The public trust in the professions is questioned by McKinlay (1973), who claims that professions relate their possession of unique skills as the basis on which they are to be trusted. Trust is fundamental to the client-professional relationship. Professions profess to know things that lay people do not know. When a client and professional are in conflict it is "usually because the individual does not know what is good for him" (Marshall, 1939).

In day care centres, this trust element is manifested in the relationship between parent and caregiver. While few would argue the desirability of trust between the parents and day care personnel, some difficult questions arise. Childrearing is a complex process encompassing cultural norms and values (Levine, 1974) that may not be shared by parents and caregivers. The well documented saga of professional intrusion in the childrearing of a lower class family (Strong-Boag, 1982) serves as an important reminder of the fallibility of professionals and their application of scientific knowledge. Trust in the professional by the client "might need to be altered to trust between the professional and client". This statement more accurately better reflects the relationship of partnership between parents and staff described in many early childhood education texts (Morrison, 1978; Cataldo, 1987), and helps to maintain the role of the parent as a legitimate epistemological base in its own right.

Besides sociological criticisms of professionalization, early childhood authors have identified similar concerns. One such issue involves the distance between clients and practitioners. Emotional involvement is said to interfere with the professional's ability to objectively assess what is best for the client (Johnson & Martin, 1966). This distance is exemplified by senior social workers being pleased that the clients are angry at them. (Toren, 1969). Katz (1984) has picked up this theme in relation to early childhood educators and has attempted to describe optimum levels

of objectivity for child care personnel that would not interfere with fulfilling the needs of the children. At the same time, some authors justifiably question the ability of "objective" caregivers to meet the emotional needs of young children (Maynard, 1985; Leach, 1979).

A final concern about the professionalization of day care personnel relates to the holistic approach to children. Melosh (1982) describes the difference in nurses' attitudes that resulted from increased professionalization. "Mr. Smith in room 4" became "the broken femur in room four" as nurses gained more academic training. The ethic of caring for the "whole patient" transformed into a compartmentalized approach to care as nurses moved from hospital training to university training. Silin (1988) has expressed the view that the drive for professionalism in early childhood education has contributed to an "undue scientism". As a result, the social and philosophical aspects of early childhood education have been overshadowed by the influence of the more scientific developmental psychology. In practice, this has meant a focus on measurable cognitive gains in children rather than a holistic approach that includes all aspects of development, including creativity. Professionalism is not a "cure-all", it involves important trade-offs which can compromise the ability to improve the lot of children. (Friesen & Dalley, 1991) For many day care workers, their nonformal commitment to his hypocratic ethic has curtailed their activities supporting professionalization.

Gender and Professionalism

There are those who claim that it is impossible for women in female semi-professions to achieve professional status, simply because of an inherent gender bias in our system of patriarchy. (Hearn, 1982). According to Ritzer and Walczak (1986), female occupations are prohibited from enjoying the benefits of professionalization by powerful male elites who perceive feminity to be antithetical to traditional (i.e., male) definitions of professionalism. Regarding social work, for example, Scotch (1971) has commented:

> Social work has always been characterized as a woman's profession. Partly this reflects the preponderance of women as practitioners. But it also represents a derogation of social work activity as being soft-minded and impractical and therefore "feminine" in quality (p. 6).

Today, the term "female profession" appears to remain an oxy-moron.

Seifert (1988) claims that recruiting more men into early childhood education would enhance the image of the occupation. The impact of gender on the status of the field is well documented (Finkelstein, 1988; Seifert, 1988). Finkelstein (1988) reviewed the history of early childhood education and concludes that, while women leaders identified professionalism with acquiring knowledge, they ignored the struggle to acquire power and status typical of the dominant professions. Not only did this result in the low pay and status of early childhood workers today, but the lack of power ultimately resulted in their lack of political and policy-making influence concerning the well being of young children.

There is a widespread belief that the predominantly female professions, such as teaching and social work, are of lower status because women's work has traditionally been secondary to their familial roles. Simpson and Simpson (1969) list in detail the characteristics of women employees that limit their capacity for power and authority: they are less intrinsically committed to work; they are less task oriented; and they require more control. This approach has been contested by Acker (1983), who accuses the sociologists of a "deficit model" of women that leads to a "blame the victim approach". Acker questions why sociologists studying predominantly male occupations have done little to learn about men's family commitments or role conflicts.

The male bias in the sociology of professions has been highlighted by Noddings (1990), who indicates that the attributes of professions were established largely by male sociologists studying male professions. We suggest that a new understanding of the professions needs to evolve which would incorporate the values and traditions (such as caring) that have been traditionally associated with feminine traits.

AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Despite a number of potentially negative aspects accompanying professionalization, and despite the difficulties associated with professionalizing a female-dominated occupational group, there are those who will still see professionalization as the best choice for solving the present-day problems in day care. High staff turnover rates, frequent "burnout", low pay and lack of respect

characterize the day care field, and take their toll on both caregivers and children alike. For those intent on reducing the seriousness of the problem through professionalization, a systems approach will most likely effect the greatest amount of long-term change in the shortest amount of time. While the conflict approach points out important unanticipated aspects of professions, a systems approach tends to emphasize complexities. In the early child care literature, this approach is referred to as the ecological perspective.

The ecological model has been used extensively in child development and day care literature. Many are attracted to this model because it highlights the web of interactions of individual groups and institutions that ultimately affect, and are affected by the object of study (usually the child). The ecological model precludes "linear" thinking. Yet, to date, much of the discussions of the professionalization of day care has, indeed, been fairly linear.

Abbot's (1988) study of professions provides an ecological explanation of how certain occupational groups develop and maintain (or lose) jurisdiction over a certain field, and thus their professional status. His conceptualization might be likened unto a "concentric circle" model. At the center of this model is the occupational group, and the manner in which it defines its work. This level also includes the ways in which the occupational group defines and implements the training of its members. The next level in the system of professions relates to conflict within the occupational group itself. Examples in the day care field might be the conflicts between trained and untrained workers, private and non-profit agencies, the "leaders" of the field (who hold workshops, conferences, establish professional organizations) and the front line workers (who often "vote with their feet" and do not attend or join). The next level in the system relates to intra-professional rivalry. This involves the competition among various groups who have a stake in day care. Battles for jurisdiction between education and social services, the school system and early childhood professionals are examples of this competition. The outer most level in this system is social forces. In regards to day care, the demographic changes relating to the female work force would be relevant. As social values change, the worth accorded children, child rearing and child care in our society might be the most influential factor affecting the status of day care personnel.

From an ecological perspective, then, it is clear that the quest for professionalization lies not merely in striving to meet the requirements of the established professions. Leaders in the early childhood field may, perhaps, have been too preoccupied with the innermost level of the system, the occupational group itself. Yet many factors, some beyond immediate control and some that could be subject to influence, are going to determine the status of day care personnel. The ecological model suggests that day care workers need to go beyond the defining of work and required training, and address the other levels of the system.

ACHIEVING PROFESSIONALIZATION

In our opinion, there are several issues that need to be addressed within this system of professions in order to achieve a professional status for day care workers that emphasizes (rather then devalues) the essence of the occupation. First, a new definition of professional which encompasses female thought and experience needs to be developed. Because women have been socialized into practicing different gender traits (such as affect, emotion and caring) than men, traditional definitions of professions embody predominantly male definitions of performance. In her discussion of law and professional education, Bender (1988) illustrates this contrast in the concept of "care". Care as prudence, suspicion and caution is typically associated with masculine approaches to issues; while care as concern and nurturing has been traditionally designated as a female disposition. A new definition of professional must be developed which encompasses the best of all human experience rather than one limited (albeit powerful) group. Given the current limiting definition of professional, it is understandable why some have instead called for the rejection of professionalization altogether for the helping (semi) professions. Richan and Mendelsohn (1973), for example, have suggested that "Social work needs to understand how other professions have come to distort their high ethical callings and become ingrown and self-aggrandizing, in order to avoid following in their footsteps" (p. 134). In our opinion, the best defense against this trend is to redefine the concept of the professional.

We recognize immediately that this redefinition is more of a call for social transformation rather than assimilation. Indeed, there are those who see this goal as rather unrealistic. In

discussing possible responses semiprofessionals can make to the opposition they experience in attempting to professionalize, Ritzer and Walczak (1986) suggest: "One method, of course, is to continue to strive for professional recognition. This seems to be relatively unwise, given the seemingly insurmountable barriers" (p. 244). At the same time, we are not alone in this quest. Noddings (1990) has noted similar movements within law, nursing, and education which have already affected considerable change. Pollard (1991) has commented: "There is a profound discrimination happening when persons who enjoy 'caregiving' have to remove themselves from 'caregiving' in order to have a sense of having an important, valued career" (p. 4).

Second, the prestige of the day care worker will only increase as people generally increase the relative importance of children in society. Day care workers and others must therefore increase their roles as child activists to help facilitate this shift in public attitudes. Butler (1969) has labeled the process where people are differentially discriminated against by virtue of their membership in a certain age group as "ageism"; similar in application to "sexism" and "racism". Although Butler coined the term to draw attention to the plight of the elderly in North American society, the concept has equal applicability to young children. An informal analysis of factors affecting the relative ranking (or status) of various occupations related to children led Pollard (1991) to conclude that the more time spent with children (caregiving), the lower the status of the occupation (such as child care worker or family day home providers). Inversely, the more time spent in administrative or research capacities, the higher the status. This type of heirarchy will be altered only when working with children is valued more highly.

Third, struggles within the occupational group need to be examined. Melosh's study of the nurses' quest for professionalism emphasized that much compassion and commitment to caring was lost as nurses' accepted the traditional professional role. Researchers are beginning to find that the vast majority of day care staff do not use professional literature, do not attend conferences, and do not behave in ways that is said to demonstrate a "professional orientation" in regards to a specific body of knowledge. (Jorde Bloom, 1989). It is essential to find out more about this large occupational group before jumping into specific strategies of professionalization.

CONCLUSION

While the efforts to conceptualize and work towards increasing the level of professionalization in early childhood education and day care have provided direction for the field, this analysis has emphasized the fluidity of the concept of the professional. The characteristics of a profession are not, and never have been, written in stone. As more and more females enter high status occupational groups, the idealized notion of professions is beginning change (Noddings, 1990). Notions such as "relationship-oriented, warmth, caring, empowering" traditionally linked with female dominated (and lower status) professions need to be incorporated the ideology of the more powerful professions. For day care workers, to emulate the traditional high status professional is neither realistic nor desirable.

The conflict approach to professionalization identifies a number of acute power advantages that professionals hold over the general populace. Traditional concepts such as trust in the professional, emotional detachment, and compartmentalized approaches to healing are particularly ineffective when working a day care setting. Children and parents would be better served by professional day care workers exhibiting trust between the professional and parent, emotional involvement and a holistic approach to children.

The applicability of the ecological model of professions to the early childhood and day care field warrants further study and discussion. However, using this perspective to view both the child care field and professions makes it clear that even if it was possible to upgrade the professional status of day care personnel, it is questionable that this phenomenon, on its own, would do much to improve the lives of young children in day care. Redefining the idea of professional to include previously excluded personal characteristics traditionally assigned to females increasing the comparable worth of children, and investigating the dynamics of the day care worker occupation are the most desired approaches.

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